

## ***DNR Migratory Gamebird Committee Meeting November 8, 2018***

Attendance: Taylor Finger (WDNR), Jason Fleener (WDNR), Trenton Rohrer (WDNR), Sara Comstock (WDNR), Bill Hirt (WDNR- WCD), Tyler Strelow (WDNR - LE), Brenda Kelly (WDNR), Peter David (GLIFWC), Chip Lovell (USDA-APHIS), Greg Kidd (USDA-NRCS), Bruce Urban (WI Waterfowl Association), John Wetzel (La Crosse County Conservation Alliance), Greg Egan (Hunters Rights Coalition), Jeff Scott (Sauk County Sportsman Alliance, Paul Samerdyke (WDNR - SOD), Brian Glenzinski (Ducks Unlimited), Mark Kakatsch (Wisconsin Wildlife Federation)

Not in Attendance: Sumner Matteson (WDNR – Natural Heritage Conservation), Joel Brice (Delta Waterfowl), Josh Martinez (WDNR), Linda Olver (WDNR), Kurt Waterstradt (USFWS), Todd Cook (Wisconsin Conservation Congress)

### **Jason Fleener Update on Wetland program**

Sara Comstock was just hired as new Wetland assistant LTE. She is from UWSP and has worked on the WDRN/UWSP GHRA project. Great addition to the team.

Jason Fleener updated us on the Wisconsin Plan should be done by the next summer 2019. USFWS JV really liked the idea but not enough to fund it. In the end this is a DNR and UWSP Endowment funded projects. It's a big enough project we hired a post doc to take on this task and handle the datasets. NAWMP goals are

1. To have abundant, resilient waterfowl populations,
2. Wetlands to sustain these populations
3. Growing numbers of waterfowl hunter.

The overarching goal of this Wisconsin Plan is to create spatially explicit maps to strategically place conservation actions across the state for the next 15 years. These actions are restoration, enhancement, and acquisition projects. The decision support tool maps are driven by these data sets/attributes.

- Conservation issues
  1. Population Objectives
  2. Breeding season habitat limitations
  3. Non-breeding habitat limitations
- User groups and Conservations
  4. Hunters
  5. Birders/others
  6. Social values of wetlands (ecological goods and services, water quality, reducing gulf hypoxia.

Once drafted they will take the plan around the state to show biologist and from all agencies to get buy in and get some feedback. Jacob Straub will also be leaving this spring and heading back to New York for family matters.

Other new issue is the review of the duck stamp process. At some point we would like to have a conference call to talk about our guidance document. Talk about the potential change and having district allocation like turkey and pheasant stamp funding for DNR funded projects. DNR would have a set amount out of the pot which would then be allocated to different regions on a X% for amount of habitat in that region. Regional supervisors would then decide where money goes rather than the committee. Still have open funding for NGOs. Restoration projects may be done differently we need to wait and hear from division leadership on what sideboards we will be given for next stamp funding cycle.

Brenda Kelly - we reviewed these projects in the past because we were considered to be experts. If you remove that do you lose that knowledge? We have already lost that in committee membership turnover.

You are putting decision making into people's hands that don't have wetland/duck backgrounds are they going to make/choose the best projects. These individuals are just as stretched for time just as much as we are.

Brian Glenzinski -I think if this is the way it goes the decisions should be made by the DNR wetland/waterfowl expert in that region. I am comfortable with DNR professional. He Still believes we should have a competition statewide for state money. This will keep bad projects being funded because a good project was in an area that just didn't have money for that project.

Jason Fleener - It's more of that fact it's a time intensive process for our committee. More so for turkey and pheasant stamp projects this is how their projects are divvied up and chosen. DNR is also currently undergoing an assessment of all wetland infrastructure and prioritize them. That could be a helpful decision-making tool.

#### **Chip Lovell USDA update**

USDA Canada goose nest impacted Egg oiling in 5 communities, 27 roundups captured 1342 geese donated to pantries or donated to animal facilities (Makenzie center) 200-300 pounds of meat. 23 bands were collected all geese were local and in same general area they were banded. 31 geese were removed from airports.

24 Mute swans removed from all around the state. No successful nesting mute swans. Went into Tichigan and oiled eggs (Tichigan) is really only breeding population in the state and have 20-30 swans) total Wisconsin population of mute swans is under 50 in the state. Hope to go in and do captures next year in some areas (trumpeters moving into those areas). They also helped remove 65 out of upper Michigan north of Green Bay.

Avipel approval. 100-150 Sandhill crane depredation permits are given out in Wisconsin 5-15 cranes may be taken per permit. On average 400-500 sandhill cranes are taken each year on crop damage permits.

#### **Fall updates from around the state**

**Bruce U NW Wisconsin** - Hunting early was good until October. Substantial amount on GB and yet. Hunter success on Bay hit and miss because of weather (wind) otherwise harvest is higher than normal on bay. Shore hunters have a lot of success.

**Tyler Strelow SW Wisconsin** - Teal season was normal same issues as past lots of positive comments. Statewide opener all positive feedback. Only negative in Oshkosh not able to hunt two openers. Reduced pressure in some areas. It kept birds around longer. Overall good year for harvest. Highwater dispersed the birds. Positive goose bag limit feedback. On track 250-300 citations.

**Peter David** - Early ripening areas were bad. Few areas had good crop like in the Hayward areas. Overall below average crop.

**Greg Egan SW Wisconsin** - Openers were good lots of people mostly wood ducks that has slowed down fewer birds in refuge cold weather pushing in from west should change things. Greater White Fronted Goose on the river last week.

**John Wetzel SW Wisconsin** - Water has been high up 2-3 feet. Hard to find islands to stay dry. Opener was good 2<sup>nd</sup> week cold in prairies we did well for a while and has slowed again. Last couple weeks have been stale everywhere. May see another push this weekend.

**Jeff Scott Central Wisconsin** - Opener was really good. Everything came to the screeching halt right after. All birds still north. Starting to improve a little bit. Recently more birds. Lake Winnebago has no birds that we can see with spotting scopes from shore. Wood ducks and mallards still in Sauk county. Access is hard. Waiting for birds to come.

**Bill Hirt Central Wisconsin** - Spring was late to come. 22 inches on April 15 & 16. Poor production for Wood duck and Mallard because of snow. Property counts in early sept. and run up to opener were less than normal but lots of teal towards the end that brought them back to average. Bag data average duck per hunter 2.0 Saturday 1.5 on Sunday this is average but maybe a slight dip. No negative comments about statewide opener everyone loved it. Hunter numbers were way down 10-year average is 532 hunters. In 2018, the number of hunters on the property was 305 due to the statewide opener. Mead was fairly dry in mid-summer. As soon as we put a press release out about it, it began to rain and ended up with as much acreage as normal. By mid-October week of 17<sup>th</sup> our highest ever property waterfowl counts of 9100 ducks attributed to some early migration, early closer and statewide opener. Overall harvest was pretty average. Mead is currently past peak. Mallard regained spot as top bird in bag. Still have open water to date. Expected early average first solid freeze over (next week).

**Brenda Kelly SW Wisconsin** - During the banding operation more blue winged teal in banding operation than seen before. Lots of opportunities. No negative comments on early teal season or statewide opener. High water just starting to come down on the river. Created accessibility issues but spread out birds. Bag check data liked the same day opener. Parking lots were not as crowded. Wood duck number one bird in bag followed by blue winged teal, followed closely by mallards. Divers are in for weeks. Earliest diver migration to date. CANV are there to be had currently.

**Gregg Kidd SE Wisconsin** - Paradise valley 65 cars in parking lot opening day must be doing something right.

**Jason Fleener S Wisconsin** - Record high water across the state. Pleased to report most infrastructure has done well with a few exceptions. Grand river being a notable one the marsh broke the dam and the marsh is now dry/drying.

**Mark Kakatsch SE Wisconsin** - Only been skunked one day. Every day he has seen something. Above average year. Best early teal season in that area. Early goose better than average although low production due to spring snow. Hunting pressure has been significantly lower with birds all spread out due to every bean and corn field having water in them. Every weekend see how season is going everybody has been positive. Elimination of Horicon zone positive.

**Paul Samerdyke SE Wisconsin** - lot of repetition lots of highwater, 20 inches of snow in April and then rain after that. Floating cattail bogs this summer. Late spring kept some other birds in this area that typically don't nest here. Opening day 101 vehicles. Mixed bags gadwall, widgeon, mallard and teal. USFWS tried a drawdown bunch of food. Two drawdowns. Mixed comments others not so much. Lots of water in the area. Staff has been dealing with dam issues quite a bit. Working in combination with USFWS and Theresa. Greenhead impoundment renovations are on hold until conditions dry out. Geese were spread far and thin. Ducks we were a little thin. 1<sup>st</sup> trumpeter swan on DNR side.

#### ***Taylor Finger Waterfowl program/world update***

Drew Fowler is in the state starting on Monday. Jumping right in it. Habitat composition for the BWT study. Living document. Ron spent decades on this information and it will be used. PHD was on snow goose health.

Banding was down across the state due to a variety of reasons. April snow on production, new staff, weather, nuisance wildlife issues.

Mississippi river survey year two of three on new survey design. Used to fly weekly flights now reduced and use other data or modeling to fill in the blanks. Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> was the first flight. Two-day flight now to reduce observer fatigue and create a safer flight. USFWS plane pilot, biologist and one dnr tech. Next flights will occur Nov 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>.

Green Bay survey- the first flight was Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>. Counted 43,000 birds took some video and posted data. Funded by local funds rather than the waterfowl program funds.

A video may be produced to explain what a transect is and how DNR staff are counting birds and what that means for the number of birds that are provided online.

Notes from the field. New tool for hunters. We ask managers from around the state to complete a 5 min survey on what is going on in their area. Things like most abundant birds, weather, any area updates, water levels, food availability, hunter pressure, and ice coverage.

DNR APP- new to the DNR the hunting app is out there to help hunters put mapping, shooting hours and regulations all in one spot. Around 40,000 downloads to date.

New online input tool for the spring survey. Same process as before but make it user friendlier for the hunter. We will promote this via GovDelivery, newspaper, FB, FB live, meetings.

Management plan- Would like to get see a plan sent out. Meeting with the Ad Hoc committee soon to talk about the public input process and to finalize some of the plan before taking in front of the board. General buy in from the group.

Migratory bird season setting process- General buy in from the group. Would like to first test this new way out maybe for a shorter time frame than 5 years but for the most part general buy in. We would like to get feedback before and after the first setting process. Some would like to see these rulings in conjunction with zone setting (5 years) but agree start small and see how it goes. If we are going to do it don't wait try to do it asap. By only changing things every so often we will also see more people show up to meetings to see change happen.

### ***Taylor Finger WCC updates***

Waterfowl Blinds on public lands- No person or persons should be able to hunt or occupy that blind so long as that person whose name is legally posted in such blind prior to 1 hour before the legal shooting time.

Not really going to happen because that is privatizing public land.

Humane methods to discourage goose- Communities keep killing geese its expensive, inefficient, sad, and doesn't work.

DNR already encourages communities to employ nonlethal methods first. It is up to the community to decide how they deal with geese.

Long-tailed duck bag limits- Lower bag limit from 6 to 3. Our best-known guess is 1 million we shoot 5,000-7000. Could be considered proactive. It is limiting though. Lots of birds on Green bay/Lake Michigan we may never see show up in our HIP data we also know anything about. No scientific data to push this resolution through. It will be taken to voted one more time in January by WCC leadership council.

Tyler s. Be cautions on being conservative as we are conservative on other issues (Black ducks and Hen mallard)

### ***Taylor Finger- Upcoming Issues***

Waterfowl closed area. We are simplifying, re-designation, deletions and digitizing of the closers.

Tyler S. needs to happen a lot of closed area are not up to date.

Greg K.- NRCS questions on restricting motor use on navigable water way is in chapter 30.

Peter David – talk to tribes on some of those closed areas. Most of the time they will adopt but in some cases, they may not adopt them.

Zone changes-Will begin discussions on new zone changes after this season leading up to the 2021 waterfowl season setting.

Currently we have been asked by three board members why do we have a zone that is two-day difference. Public comments and evidence currently is that no in the next 5 years we will not going to have a 45-day season. That excuse doesn't hold any weight. And you can't have a zone just for the purpose of having a zone.

No one was super happy with any ideas that were shown.

Brenda Kelly - would like to see social media and input on zone changes. Ask very folk that hunt there to see what they want on the river One question do you want to hunt later in the survey in exchange for hunting in October.

Some believe it's crazy that we even have a split. Only addressing the late season hunter

John Wetzel - Ask USFWS to make the great lakes a different zone completely without messing up with other zones and season structures in the state.

Swan management plan - update to the plan will be coming for the central and Mississippi flyway.

Mourning dove reward band - we will get 10-15 bands. Use reporting rate to adjust bag limits and harvest.

Veterans Hunt - can decide to add with youth or to have by itself.

Likely add veterans to youth day adding 6,000 people at minimum could be closer to 10,000. Regular waterfowl hunter going to dislike as most dislike youth hunt already.

Double looping update - for the foreseeable future 7 extra days doesn't seem to be on the table.

Discussion on hen mallard a black duck can we liberalize or collect more information to inform our decisions.

With no more goose registration what is the purpose of the goose permit? It is just one more thing for hunters to buy and it only funds part of the LTE position. Can we find a different way to fund that position and get rid of goose tag?